

structed and garrisoned on the western shore of the inlet, in close proximity to Murmansk, two small defence systems of the bridgehead type, with the object of covering the landing on that bank of reinforcements from Murmansk sufficient to hold the enemy in check until such time as my Kola reserve should be able to cross the inlet.

7. Whilst hoping that the above preparations and dispositions would enable me to prevent the occupation of Murmansk by the enemy, it appeared highly desirable to take such steps as were possible to ensure my retaining a footing at some spot adjacent to the Kola inlet should I be forced to evacuate Murmansk, for thus I might still be in a position to prevent that port being utilised as a submarine base. I arranged accordingly that Alexandrovsk (on the western shore of the inlet and close to its mouth) should be the rallying point for all troops should I be driven from Murmansk, and collected there supplies, stores and ammunition sufficient for 2,000 men for one month. I also placed on board sailing ships and lighters additional stores ready for conveyance to Alexandrovsk should the necessity arise; reconnaissances were made and a defence system mapped out; and plans were drawn up for the conveyance to the rallying point of such troops as might have been driven back down the eastern side of the inlet. As the landing place of the Peterhead cable is at Alexandrovsk, I should have been able to maintain communication with England, and the anchorage facilities were found to be such as to promise better co-operation with the Navy than could have been ensured elsewhere.

Defence of Petchenga.

8. Even in summer it is not an easy matter to transfer troops from Murmansk to Petchenga, as there is at the latter place no quay alongside which vessels can lie, and it is only at high water that troops can land by boat or launch without wading through long stretches of deep mud. During the winter the harbour is icebound, and the landing and embarkation of troops become operations of very great difficulty. The land route between Murmansk and Petchenga is impassable for troops in summer without the expenditure of much time and labour, whilst during winter an arduous and circuitous track must be followed along which shelter is unobtainable except for very small parties.

I preferred, therefore, to strengthen the Petchenga garrison and to treat it as a self-contained force, rather than to hold the defences lightly and trust to reinforcements from Murmansk arriving in time in case of need. As there were many indications of the enemy's intention to attack Petchenga in the autumn of 1918 the furnishing of the garrison, which I considered it necessary to detail for its defence, constituted a severe drain on my resources; the more so as it had been decided to withdraw H.M.S. "Cochrane," complements from which vessel had formed the original garrison and for many months had been the mainstay of the defence. I judged, however, that my decision was fully justified, since, with carefully prepared position and supplies for seven months, I could rest assured that the garrison was capable of carrying out its allotted task without reinforcements from me, unless attacked in overwhelming strength in men and guns.

Necessity for offensive action.

9. It was evident that no purely passive action on my part would induce Germany to retain in Finland troops which she was desirous of transferring elsewhere. If, therefore, I was to succeed in my effort to prevent the despatch of German reinforcements from this theatre to the Western Front it was necessary for me to undertake offensive operations, or at least to produce the impression that such was my intention.

Apart, therefore, from the troops required to complete and man the local defences of Murmansk and Petchenga, and to hold important points on my line of communication, I employed all my available forces in a manner calculated to spread the idea that offensive operations were in contemplation. Increased activity was displayed both in northern and central Karelia, detachments being pushed forward boldly towards the Finnish frontier, and steps being taken to improve the communications running westward from the railway. To the south I occupied Soroka and commenced to repair the railway bridges (destroyed in July, 1918, by the Bolsheviks) between that town and Olimpi. In addition, certain long-distance patrols were furnished with false orders purporting to be signed by Staff Officers of high rank, and making mention of large formations.

Arrangements, which it is believed proved successful, were made for these to find their way into the enemy's hands.

It would appear that the above measures met with some success; for I have in my possession a copy of the instructions issued to a German agent in which the importance is impressed on him of ascertaining the number of divisions operating in this area, their composition, and the commander of each. Moreover, it has been ascertained on trustworthy authority that General Von Der Goltz, so far from being willing to transfer troops from Finland, sent forward continued demands for reinforcements.

These small operations, with a view to giving an impression of an impending offensive, were carried out to a very large extent by local troops, who had been enlisted and trained by British officers since the arrival of my force, and whose previous military experience, if any, had been of the most limited nature.

Situation after the Armistice.

10. The signing of the Armistice of 11th November, 1918, removed simultaneously one of the main causes of the presence of my troops in this region, and the threat of attack by vastly superior forces with which I had been faced during the preceding 4½ months. Despite my efforts to force Germany to retain her troops in Finland, the need for reinforcements to check the Allied advance in France proved too pressing, and a large proportion of the German troops in this theatre had been withdrawn by the commencement of November. By the middle of that month all danger of the establishment by Germany of submarine bases in Northern Russia had ceased, together with any possibility of an attack on Murmansk or Petchenga by German troops. The situation, however, continued to be one of anxiety; for considerable numbers of Finnish White Guards were concentrated near the eastern border of Finland, and strong parties were still in occupation of portions of Russian Karelia. More-